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CHRISTIANITY

Distinct from the

Religion of Nature,

IN ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

*Christianity as Old as the Crea-
tion, &c.*

CHRISTIANITY



OF THE

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Distinct from the

Religion of Nature,

IN ANSWER

To a late Book, Entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation, &c.


PART. III.

In which the Author's *Occasional Objections* to the *Credit* and *Authority* of *Divine Revelation* are consider'd.

By THOMAS BROUGHTON, A. M.
Reader at the Temple-Church.

L O N D O N:

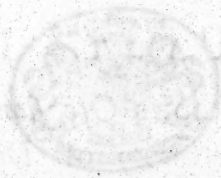
Printed for WEAVER BICKERTON at Lord Bacon's Head, the Corner of *Palsgrave-Head-Court*, without *Temple-Bar*, 1732.



CHRISTIANITY

RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

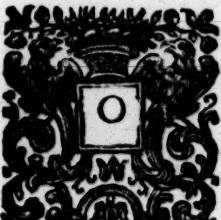
THE NEW TESTAMENT
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



THE NEW TESTAMENT
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT
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UR Author's *New Method* (consider'd in my last) of determining what *can*, or *cannot*, be the *Reveal'd* Will of God, not from *Fact*, but meer *Hypothesis*, gave us a sufficient proof of the *real* intent and design of his *Scheme*. We pretend to a *divine Revelation*: He does not deny It. We say, that this Revelation contains some Precepts of a *Positive Nature*: This he will not allow: Why? Because it is inconsistent with a certain *Hypothesis* of his own invention. It is in vain to plead, that These Precepts are plainly and expressly laid down; that if he will give himself the trouble of looking into This Revelation, he must see that They are so. The Answer is Short: *Divine Revelation* is incapable

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capable of such Precepts; and, therefore, we may choose which *side* of this *dilemma* we think fit, either to part with our *Positive* Duties, or give up our *Revelation*. Here the true Design of the Author unfolds itself: He is, in reality, little concern'd, whether *Christianity* enjoins any Duties of a *Positive* Nature, or no; since, either way, the Cause of *Deism* is effectually serv'd. If it does not, it is *nothing more* than *Natural Religion*; If it does, it cannot possibly be *Divine Revelation*.

But, besides the natural tendency of his *Scheme* to overthrow *Reveal'd Religion*, he has advanc'd several *Occasional Objections* to its *Credit* and *Authority*; the most material of which I come, in the last place, to consider. And,

First, He objects to the Nature of its *Evidence*; which can be but That of *Probability*. "If it be but probable" (says he) that God made any External "Revelation at all, it can be but probable, tho' perhaps not in the same "degree of Probability, that he made "this, or that Revelation." (p. 184.) Where he evidently insinuates, that the *Truth* of *Revelation in general*, however the *degrees* of *Probability* may differ, must necessarily, from the nature of its

its *Evidence*, be very *precarious* and *uncertain*. To take off the force of which *Objection*, it will be proper to enquire a little into the true Nature of *Probability*, and its efficacy towards raising *conviction* in the Mind.

It is agreed on all hands, that *Probability* is a kind of *Evidence inferior* to that of *Demonstration*. But then I assert, that the *Difference*, or *Interval*, between *Demonstration*, and the *highest degree of Probability*, is so exceedingly *small*, that the *Conviction* arising from *both* is, to all intents and purposes, *equally strong*. As, in *Computation*, a *small Fraction* may be neglected without affecting the result or *sum Total*; so, tho' *Probability*, in its *highest degree*, falls a little short of *Demonstration*, yet is the defect so inconsiderable, that it *equally* commands the *Assent* of the Mind with *Demonstration* itself. Again, As, in *Painting*, it is difficult for the skilfullest Eye to distinguish the exact *boundaries* of *Light* and *Shade*, or of two *colours* insensibly diluting and mixing with each other; so is it difficult for the strongest Imagination exactly to discern where *Probability ends*, and *Demonstration begins*. To prove this experimentally, select any two *Propositions*,

the one *highly probable*, the other capable of *demonstration*: for instance, these two; *There is such an Island as Jamaica*; and *The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones*. For the Truth of the latter you have *Euclid's Demonstration*; for that of the former only the concurrent *testimony* of numbers, who have seen the Island. To know, whether your *conviction* of the Truth of Both be equal, examine your mind, whether it entertains any *doubt* or scruple concerning either. If it does not; you may be sure, that the *Evidence* for both, tho' not *mathematically equal*, is yet sufficient to produce an *equal Assent*: And you may as wisely, and securely, make a voyage to *Jamaica*, upon the *probable Evidence*, that there is such an *Island*, as proceed in any *Mathematical Enquiries* upon the strength of *Euclid's Demonstrations*.

It being true, then, that *Probability* may rise to so *high* a degree, as to be of *equal* force towards commanding the *Assent* of the mind with *Demonstration* itself; If *External Revelation* be attended with this *high* degree of *Evidence*, it is no objection to it, that it *can be but probable*. Where there is *sufficient Evidence* of the Truth of any Thing,

to

to require more is highly absurd and unreasonable.

The Question, then, will be, whether *External Revelation* be capable of this high degree of *Probability* or not. If you will believe our Author, it cannot; and for this reason, because, however *probable* Revelation may appear, when it is first publish'd to the World, the Evidence of its Truth must continually decrease; "the very nature of "Probability (it seems) being such, that, "were it only left to Time itself, even "That wou'd wear it quite out; at least, "if it be true, what Mathematicians "pretend to demonstrate, *viz.* that the "Probability of Facts, depending on "Human Testimony, must gradually "lessen, in proportion to the distance "of Time, when they were done." And he adds, "We have a reverend "Divine *, who has publish'd, as he "thinks, a demonstration of this with "relation to Facts recorded in Scrip- "ture, and has gone so far, as to fix "the precise time, when All probabi- "lity of the Truth of the History of "Christ will be entirely spent and ex- "hausted." (*p.* 185.) If this be true, The Probability of the *Gospel History*

* *Craig's Principia Mathem. Theologiæ Christi.*

has

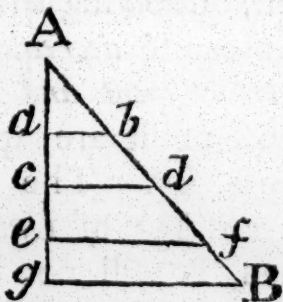
has been constantly decreasing ever since its first promulgation; and consequently We, of this *present* Age, have much *less* reason to believe in *Christ*, than They had, who lived *five hundred*, or *a thousand*, years ago.

To which I reply, That, When we speak of *Facts*, depending on *Human Testimony*, we ought to distinguish between the *memory* of *Facts*, convey'd by *Oral Tradition* from one person to another, and That deliver'd down in *Historical Records*. The Injury, which these distinct kinds of *Testimony* receive from Length of *Time* is by no means *equal*. The former may be greatly impair'd, perhaps quite worn out, by it: but this is not the case of the latter. It is true, The successive *Copies* of a *Written Testimony* may have been gradually *corrupted*; but how does this *lessen* the *Probability* of the *Facts* recorded in it? It may render the knowledge of those *Facts*, with all their *Circumstances*, more *difficult* to come at: but, where a *Passage* in an *Author*, relating a *matter of Fact*, is clear and intelligible, without any suspicion of a *false reading*, Why is not the *Probability* of its Truth the *same now*, that it was *five hundred*, or *a thousand Years* ago?
Why

Why, *Mathematicians* have demonstrated the contrary from the Nature of *Probability*; particularly "A Reverend Divine * has fix'd the precise "Time, when all probability of the "Truth of the History of Christ will "be entirely spent, and exhausted." But, besides that the *Increase* and *Decrease* of *Probability*, depending on such a variety of circumstances, and those perpetually changing, seems to me incapable of being reduc'd to *Mathematical Calculation*, to Mr. Craig's pretended *Demonstration* in particular I ob-

* Mr. Craig, if I remember right (not having the *Treatise* by me) builds his demonstration on the following Lemma.

Velocitates Suspicionis crescunt in duplicatâ ratione Temporum. Which he endeavours to prove from a Triangle; in which *Aa*, *ac*, *ce*, *e g*, are the several Intervals of Time; *ab*, *cd*, *ef*, *g B*, the velocities of the Suspicion at each Interval; consequently The Velocity of the Suspicion at the Interval of Time *a* will be to that at *c* as the Square of *Aa* to the Square of *Ac*. and so of the rest.



But the misfortune is, that by the same method we can demonstrate the very reverse. For substitute the term *Probabilitatis* in the room of *Suspicionis*, and the Proposition will be *Velocitates Probabilitatis* crescunt in ratione duplicatâ Temporum. But who does not see, that this Proposition is quite the reverse of the other, and yet the pretended *Demonstration* equally applicable to it?

ject,

ject, that if the *Probability* of the *History* of *Christ* continually decreases, it must have done so from the beginning ; and consequently the number of *Profelytes* to *Christianity*, after the *first Propagators* of it were dead, must have proportionably decreas'd: Whereas the contrary is true. Its *votaries* continu'd to increase, till the whole *Roman Empire* became *Christian*. So that, in the case of the *Gospel History*, the *Probability* of it shou'd seem to have *encreas'd*; every new Accession of *Profelytes* being an *additional Proof* and Confirmation of its Truth. And, therefore, I shou'd chuse to illustrate the subject by the *Fall* of a *Heavy Body*, whose *Velocity* *encreases* in proportion to the *Time* of its *Descent*. But, supposing the *Probability* of *Christ's History* to *decrease*, still it can never be *entirely spent and exhausted*, till the *Records* of it are quite *unintelligible*, or quite *lost*. The former may happen in an Age of *Universal Ignorance*: but, then, it will not be owing to the Nature of *Probability*. The latter, considering the prodigious number of *Copies*, can scarce ever happen. The burning of a thousand *Alexandrian Libraries* wou'd not avail: nothing less can effect it, than the *General Conflagration*.

But,

But, farther to weaken the Authority of *External Revelation*, it is alledg'd by this Author, that we cannot be certain we are not *impos'd* upon: for he asks, "Ought we not to be certain, "that the first Propagators of it cou'd "not be impos'd on themselves, or "wou'd not impose on others; or, in "other words were infallible and im-
 "peccable?" (*p.* 243.) — The reason why, he hints, they might be impos'd on themselves, is, because "numbers "have taken their own *reveries* for di-
 "vine Inspirations" — And the reason why they might impose on others is taken from some Instances in Scripture itself of "Inspir'd persons as much "govern'd by their passions as other "men" — Here he instances in *Abraham's* incestuous marriage with his Sister; *David's* inhuman Treatment of *Uriah*; *Solomon's* Idolatry, &c. These Instances, he says, plainly Shew, that "Inspir'd Persons, whether Prophets, "or Apostles, are subject to the same "passions, even to dissembling, and lying, as other men." — Nay farther, Even, "Supposing Apostles, and Prophets impeccable, as well as infallible, yet what certainty can People "have, that those things, which were
 C "taught

“taught by them, have been faithfully
 “convey’d down, for many generations
 “together, by Men, who were far from
 “being infallible, or impeccable?” —
 Farther still, “Admitting Tradition has
 “been a faithful Conveyancer, yet how
 “can the common people be certain
 “the Scripture has been faithfully tran-
 “slated?” — Nor is this all; for,
 “granting even that (that the Scrip-
 “ture has been faithfully translated)
 “yet, since most Texts have vastly va-
 “ried, and sometimes contrary, inter-
 “pretations, how can they be confi-
 “dent, they do not mistake their mean-
 ing?”

You see he has thrown together, in
 a sort of *climax*, a series of Objections
 to the *credit* of *divine Revelation*. I
 am sensible he will plead, that this is
 done with a view, not of destroying
 all Authority of *Reveal’d Religion*, but
 of inferring more strongly the use of
 Reason in judging even of *Revelation*
 itself. But the evident design of his
 Book will not suffer us to doubt of
 his particular view in the Objections
 now before us. I shall, therefore, di-
 stinctly review them, and consider how
 far they affect the *credit* and *Authori-
 ty* of *External Revelation*.

As

As to his first Question, "Ought we
 "not to be certain, that the first Pro-
 "pagators of it cou'd not be impos'd
 "on themselves, or wou'd not impose
 "on others?" — I answer, If we
 can be *morally certain* (and farther than
 this is neither possible, nor necessary)
 that the first Propagators of any Reli-
 gion cou'd not be impos'd on them-
 selves, nor wou'd impose on others,
 in *that particular Transaction*, there is
 no necessity to suppose them *absolute-
 ly Infallible*, or that they cou'd not
 be impos'd on in *any other* matter. If
External Revelation depends on an *Hi-
 storical Relation of Facts and Doctrines*;
 the only requisite Qualifications are *Me-
 mory* and *Fidelity*. It must be observ'd,
 that the present Question has nothing
 to do with the *style* and *manner* of
Historical Writing, but wholly regards
 the *Credit* and *Authority* of the *Writer*.
 In this view, It is no more necessary,
 that an *Historian* (and as such they must
 be consider'd) shou'd be *Absolutely In-
 fallible*, than that He shou'd be *Omni-
 potent*. If there be the *highest Probabi-
 lity*, that he has given a *faithful* and
 impartial Account of what He him-
 self was a *living Witness*, I shou'd look
 no farther into his Qualifications, nor

expect in him the Talents of a consummate *Statesman*, *General*, or *Mathematician* — We suppose *Revelation* founded upon *Fact*; and therefore, tho' there were ten thousand Instances of *Enthusiasm*, where People have taken their own *Reveries* for *divine Inspiration*, this is no Objection to a *Revelation thus* founded.

And, as particular Instances of *Enthusiasm* are no Arguments why the first Propagators of External Revelation might be *impos'd upon themselves*; so neither is it any presumption they might design to *impose on others*, that there are many instances, even in Scripture itself, of "Inspir'd Persons as much govern'd by their passions as other Men." The true Question is, What *interest* cou'd they have in imposing upon the world? What suspicion is there of *Fraud*? If it can be prov'd, that they cou'd have no *private views* to serve; If there is no room to suspect a *Cheat*; to what purpose this Author's Instances? Because *Abraham* married his Sister, *David* murther'd *Uriah*, and *Solomon* apostatiz'd from the true God; therefore *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, may not have given a *faithful Account* of the Life and Actions of a Person, with whom

whom they were *cotemporaries*, and perpetually conversant. A pretty consequence truly! — Besides, there is no reason for supposing *Abraham*, *David*, and *Solomon*, to have been *inspir'd* in the Sense, in which we are assur'd the *Apostles* were: who, after our Saviour's *Ascension*, receiv'd the *Holy Ghost* in a visible manner, in order to bring to their *remembrance* what they had heard from our Lord's own mouth, and to guide them into all *Truth*; an advantage, which no Writers of *prophane History* ever enjoy'd. With these Qualifications of *Just* and *Impartial Historians*, if They cannot find credit with our Author, I expect he will give up the most *authentick* Writers of *Antiquity*, and believe as little in *Livy*, as he does in *Luke*.

To the next question, "What certainty can People have, that those things, which were taught by them, have been faithfully convey'd down for many Generations together by Men, who were far from being infallible, or impeccable?" — if he means, How can we be sure we have the *very Doctrines* of the *First Preachers* deliver'd down to us? — I answer, We may have all the Evidence of it, which
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the Nature of the Thing is capable of, the highest degree of *Probability*; and till it is prov'd, or render'd matter of Suspicion, that We have not, it wou'd be absurd to doubt of it. As to meer *Human Errors*, such as *Inaccuracies* and *mistakes* in the *transcribing*, or rendering out of one *Language* into another and the like, I deny not but They may happen thro' *Length* of *Time*, and the many *Generations*, thro' which a *Written Revelation* is to pass; but it does not follow, that the *Doctrine* of the Revelation will be thereby *spoil'd*, or become *different* from what it *originally* was. — The general Sense of an Author is not to be collected from *single passages* of his works, but from a comparison of the several *parts* with each other. And, tho' some Expressions may be accidentally obscur'd, they may receive Light and Explication from others, which have not suffer'd the like Injury. And I doubt not, but the *main Doctrines*, and most *important Points*, of the *Christian Revelation* may be as fully prov'd from the most *corrupt*, as the most *correct* Copies of the *New Testament*. Besides I will venture to suggest one Argument to the *Christian Reader*, which I do not expect
this

this Author will allow me; which is, that, supposing a *divine Revelation* actually given to the world, it is agreeable to our Notions of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God to believe he will so far *providentially* interpose, in guarding it down to posterity, as not to suffer any *Errors* of consequence, any *Corruption*, which may destroy the *design* of the Revelation, to creep into it.

To The two last Questions, *viz.*
 “How can the Common People be
 “certain the Scripture has been faithfully translated?” — And “How can
 “they be confident they do not mistake its meaning?” — I answer,
 They must for these things depend on the *Skill* and *Honesty* of others; nor do I see any great Inconvenience in this, more than attends them in the most important concerns of Human Life. In matters of *Law* they trust to the Able *Counsellor*, in *sickness*, to the Learned *Physician*: and it would be thought surely an unreasonable Objection to the Sciences of *Law* and *Physick*, to say “How can the common People be sure that the *Lawyer* will not
 “endanger their *Property* instead of securing it, or the *Physician* administer
 “*poison* instead of *physick*?” — Now
 it

it is as impossible, that the Common People shou'd, of themselves, comprehend the meaning of the *Scripture* in its *original Languages*, as it is, that every Man shou'd be a *Lawyer*, or a *Physician*; And yet, when It is render'd into a Language they *do understand*, and when they see numbers of unquestion'd *Honesty* and Integrity, of great *Learning* and Ability, building their *Faith* upon it, and governing their *Actions* by its Precepts, have they not the greatest *moral certainty*, that *the Scripture has been faithfully translated*? and what can possibly induce them to suspect the contrary? — As to *mistaking its Sense*, No Man is accountable to God for more than He *does*, or *may*, understand: and surely the possibility of *not understanding* a Revelation is no objection to its *Authority*, when it is *understood*.

In the next place, Our Author seems to think it derogates from the *Perfection* and *Use* of *Revelation*, that its *Precepts* are not so *particular*, and *circumstantial*, as Those of *Natural Religion*, which extends its Rules to every possible circumstance of Human Life. This, he thinks, gives the *Religion* of *Nature* a great advantage over That of *Revelation*. For, “ Considering (says
“ he)

“ he) the variety of circumstances Men
 “ are under, and Those continually
 “ changing, as well as unforeseen, it
 “ is impossible to have Rules laid down
 “ by any external Revelation for ev’ry
 “ Particular Case; and therefore there
 “ must be some *Standing Rule*, disco-
 “ verable by the Light of Nature, to
 “ direct us in all such Cases.” — So
 that, according to his own position,
 All particular Cases, even under meer
Natural Religion, must be adjusted,
 and determin’d, by some General,
Standing, Rule. — How, then, does
 this prove the Superiority of the *Reli-*
gion of Nature, in the present case,
 over That of *Revelation*? Why may
 not the latter contain such general,
standing, Rules of Morality, as may be
 a sufficient direction in all *particular*
Cases? For instance, Many cases may
 be put, in which the Behaviour of
 one Man towards another is not deter-
 min’d by any Positive Laws of Society.
 Ask a *Deist*, how we are to be govern’d
 in such cases, He will refer you to
 that *standing Law* of Nature, *Do as*
you wou’d be done unto. But *Christians*
 know, that *External Revelation* has laid
 down this very *Rule*. And, as, in *Ma-*
thematical Reasoning, Every *Corollary*

is virtually included in the *Theorem* it is deduc'd from, so when such a *General Rule of Action*, as This, is propos'd by *Revelation*, every *particular application* of it is as much a Precept of *Reveal'd Religion*, as of *Natural*.

Our Author's *Objections*, hitherto, lie against *Revelation in general*. We come now to those, in which *CHRISTIANITY* consider'd as a *Particular Revelation*, is *immediately* concern'd.

And These are chiefly such as affect the *Circumstances* of this *Revelation*, or the *Manner* of its *Dispensation* to mankind: among which I shall select the *two* following, as affording great Cause of Triumph to this Author.

The *First* is, That the *Gospel Revelation* is a *Partial Institution*;

The *Second*, That it wants *Effect*.

The Former of these *Objections* consists of *Two parts*; *Christianity* being represented as a *Partial Institution*, First, because it was *not* given to mankind *from the beginning*; Secondly, because, now that it is given, it is *not Universal*.

And

And, first, *The Gospel Revelation* (I mean the *Gospel* of *Christians*, not this Author's, which every body knows stands clear of this objection) *The Gospel Revelation*, I say, is represented as a *Partial Institution*, because it was not given to mankind *from the beginning*—— This Objection, in our Author's words, stands thus. “ If the De-
 “ sign of God in communicating any
 “ thing of himself to Mankind was
 “ their Happiness, wou'd not that de-
 “ sign have oblig'd him, who at all
 “ times alike desires their Happiness,
 “ to have at all times alike communi-
 “ cated it to them? If God always
 “ acts for the good of his Creatures,
 “ what reason can be assign'd, why he
 “ shou'd not *from the beginning* have
 “ discover'd such things, as make for
 “ their good, but defer the doing it
 “ to the time of *Tiberius* ; since the
 “ sooner this was done, the greater
 “ wou'd his goodness appear? Nay, is
 “ it consistent with infinite Benevolence
 “ to hide that for many ages, which
 “ he knew was as useful at first to pre-
 “ vent, as afterwards it wou'd be to
 “ put a stop to any thing he disliked?
 “ —— If God acts upon rational mo-
 “ tives, must not the same motives,

“ that oblige him to discover any thing
 “ that’s for the good of mankind, have
 “ oblig’d him to discover every thing,
 “ that is so?” (p. 393.)

I have, in part, answer’d this Objection already *, by observing, that a *divine Revelation* is an *Act* of *Mercy*, not of *Justice*; consequently, that there may be wise *reasons*, which we are unacquainted with, why God *defer’d* doing, what he was not *oblig’d* to do at all, to a distant period of Time. — The Objection, as it is here stated, is built upon this presumption, that the *Christian Revelation* was as *fit* to have been *communicated* from the *beginning*, as at *the time*, in which it is said to have *actually* appear’d; and for this reason, because it was *as useful at first to prevent, as afterwards it cou’d be to put a stop to any thing, which God disliked*.

The *Negative* of this Proposition (*viz.* the *Impropriety* of God’s communicating the *Christian Revelation* sooner) is, perhaps, incapable of being clearly prov’d from a bare consideration of the *nature* of the *Revelation itself*: but surely it is incumbent on this Author, if he expects the Objection to have any

* Vid. Part. 1. p. 30.

weight with the *Believers* of Revelation, to demonstrate the *Affirmative*.—To a *Christian* it is sufficient to prove that the *Gospel Revelation* was actually not given till a certain period of Time, to satisfy him that *That* was the *properest* Time.—A *Deist*, perhaps, will not allow this reason: but then he must demonstrate, that *Human Nature* was, at all times, equally prepar'd to receive this Revelation, and that the *success* of the *Gospel* wou'd have been the same, in whatever Age of the world it had appear'd. If he cannot shew this, the very reverse, for ought he knows, may be the Truth of the Case. Mankind might not, at all times, have been equally dispos'd for the reception of a divine Revelation; and the propagation of a new Religion might possibly not have met with equal success in any other Age of the World—This is certain, that *Augustus*, the immediate Predecessor of *Tiberius*, (in whose reign *Christ* was born,) had establish'd an universal Peace over the whole *Roman Empire*; which, no doubt, greatly contributed to the quicker and more successful Propagation of the *Gospel*; a circumstance, which discovers to us something of the Propriety of this particular period of Time beyond

yond any other for accomplishing this gracious design of Providence. Nor can we well doubt, that the *wisdom* of God was determin'd, in its choice of *this period*, by something in the fluctuating state and condition of *Human Nature itself* (which he cou'd not but foresee) when we view That *regular OEconomy of Providence*, so plainly to be trac'd in the *History of the Bible*, from the *Fall of Man* to the Appearance of the *Promis'd Seed*; and consider the *gradual Openings* of this *gracious* design in a *Succession of Prophecies*, all pointing to *one person* and *one period of time*, and all remarkably accomplish'd in *both*. And therefore the Juncture of *Christ's* appearance in the flesh is very *properly*, as well as *emphatically*, styl'd in Scripture *The Fullness of Time*.

But *Christianity* is not only accus'd of *Partiality*, because it was not given to mankind *from* the beginning; but another quarrel against it is, that, now it is given, it is not *Universal*; and the gracious Author of it is charg'd with *Cruelty* in not bestowing it on *all* his creatures *equally*. For "Can a Being
"be denominated merciful and good
"(this Gentleman asks) Who is so on-
"ly to a Few, but cruel and unmerci-
"ful

"ful to the rest? And certainly All the
 "Arguments urg'd from the necessities
 "of mankind, and the abundant good-
 "ness of God, will equally prove, that
 "this Revelation, did it teach a New
 "Religion, shou'd be *Universal*, as that it
 "shou'd be at all." (p. 401.) — But this
 Question is easily answer'd by another.
 What *right* has *Human Nature* to a
Revelation at all? What demand have
 we upon God's *Justice* for this *Addi-*
tional Light, after having *originally* re-
 ceiv'd from him such a measure of
Reason, as wou'd have enabled us, had
 it been duly follow'd, to discover, and
 obey, his *Will*? The *Abuse* of our *Rea-*
son sure is no *Plea* for such a *Favour*.
 And, therefore, if God thinks proper
 to grant it to one part of his Creatures,
 and not the other; he bestows on *these*,
 indeed, more than they *deserve*, but
 does no *Injury* thereby to the other.

But we are ask'd, "What Human
 "Legislator, if he found any defect in
 "his Laws, and thought it for the good
 "of his Subjects to add new Laws,
 "wou'd not promulgate them to all
 "his People? Or what Parent wou'd
 "act after so partial a manner, as *we*
 "suppose the common Parent of man-
 "kind has done?" — But are these
 Cases

Cases *parallel*? Can any Argument be fairly drawn from the nature of *civil Government*, or the direction of a *private family*, to the great concerns of *Providence* in the wonderful œconomy and Government of the *Universe*?

But, what, tho' *Revelation* be not *universal*, is this any objection to the Use and Advantage of it, where it is bestow'd? — Shall we reject the *favour* of God, because others are destitute of them? Shall we refuse to be *Christians*, because the *Chinese* are not? In short, the whole Objection to *Revelation* on account of its *Partiality* is highly absurd and unreasonable: And He, who asks, Why *Revelation* was not given *sooner*, or why not to *all*; may with equal reason demand, why God did not *create* the *Earth* *sooner*? why, now it is created, *some* parts of it are blessed with *greater fertility* than *others*? Why Men *differ* in *degrees* and *strength* of *Reason*? or why *They* were not All created *Angels*?

But, secondly, tho' the conduct of God may stand acquitted of *Cruelty* and *Injustice* in not giving this *Revelation* *sooner*, and, when given, not to *all* his creatures alike; How shall we justify his providence in not better securing

securing the *good Effects* of it in the world, in not rendering it *effectual* to the *Reformation* of mankind, the very purpose for which we suppose it given? — In this Objection our Author greatly triumphs; the substance of which I have connected, and thrown together, as follows. — “ If Revelation was absolutely necessary to recover mankind out of their universally degenerate and corrupted state, and replace them in a state suitable to the original dignity and excellency of their nature — must not Revelation have had its intended effect, and made Christians — much more perfect, and excellent, than men cou’d possibly be in times of unavoidable corruption? ” (p. 402.) — And yet

“ What impartial Man, who has compar’d the former and present condition of mankind, can think the world much mended, since the times of *Tiberius*, or, tho’ ever so well vers’d in Church History, can, from the conduct of Christians, find that they are arriv’d to any higher state of perfection, than the rest of mankind? ” (p. 404.) — For,

“ Alas! we find, that what, in most places, passes for the Christian Religion

"ligion — has transform'd this social,
 "and benign, creature (*Man*) into one
 "fierce and cruel, and made him act
 "with such rage and fury against those,
 "who never did or design'd him any
 "Injury, as cou'd not have enter'd into
 "the Heart of man to conceive —
 "even in a state of Degeneracy and
 "Corruption." (p. 406.) — And it is
 certain that

"The Corruptions of the Gospel
 "have been more fatal to the Happiness
 "of mankind, than all the Superstitions
 "of the *Pagan World*." (p. 407.) —
 To which I answer,

First, That this Objection, if there
 is any thing in it, lies, not against *Re-*
velation, but *Human Nature*: The Gos-
pel may have a *Natural Efficacy* to re-
form Mankind, and yet it may be in
 the power of *Free-Agents* to defeat its
 Influence. But it is unjust to charge
 this *want of Effect* on the *Gospel* itself.
 — A *sick Man* may refuse the *salu-*
tary Assistance of the *Physician*; but
 will you, therefore, say The *Prescrip-*
tion wou'd not have been *effectual*, had
 the *Patient* comply'd with it? — A
Barren soil is no proof, that the en-
 livening *Heat* of the *Sun*, and refresh-
 ing *showers* of *Rain*, have not a *Na-*
tural

tural efficacy to produce the *Fruits* of the Earth.——But, Secondly,

This Objection falls short of the Author's Aim. It is founded in the Corruptions of the Gospel, and lies properly, not against the *Christian Religion* itself, but something which, in most places, *passes for Christianity*.——But Why, then, is it produc'd as an Objection against the Christian Revelation? Why must the *True Religion* be revil'd on account of this *Impostor* in its borrow'd Garb and Semblance? We readily grant, that Infinite *Mischiefs* may arise from *mistaken* notions of the Gospel Scheme. But what then? Is the Gospel in fault, or those, who *mistake* its nature? If the bitterest *rage* has sprung from, and the most shocking *cruelties* been acted, on pretence of, *Religion*, is *Christianity* to blame, which expressly commands us to *live peaceably with all men*, and breaths nothing but *Brotherly Love*, and *Universal Charity*?——*Impieties* of all kinds may have been the *Accidental*, but they were not the *Necessary*, Consequences of spreading the *Christian Religion* in the world.

But there is, really, no Foundation of *Truth* in this Objection. And I will venture to appeal, with the late

Dr. Clarke, * to any impartial Person, in the least acquainted with the *History of Mankind, Whether the Testimony of Christ* — concerning the *Immortality of the Soul, and the rewards and punishments of a future State, have not had (notwithstanding all the corruptions of Christianity) visibly, in experience and effect, a greater and more powerful Influence upon the Lives and Actions of men, than the reasoning of all the Philosophers, that ever were in the world* — *Whether in Christian Countries (at least where Christianity is profess'd in any tolerable degree of Purity) the generality, even of the meaner and most vulgar and ignorant people, have not truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehensions concerning his Attributes and Perfections, a deeper Sense of the difference of Good and Evil, a greater regard to moral Obligations, and to the plain and most necessary duties of Life, and a more firm and universal expectation of a future state, of rewards and punishments; than, in any Heathen Country, any considerable number of men were ever found to have.*

Right Principles have a natural Efficacy to produce Right Action; and tho' I do not deny, but Men may sometimes

* *Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 311.*

act *right* upon *wrong Principles*, yet as these can never have a natural tendency to regulate the Actions of Mankind, this can but be *accidental*. It is as absurd in *Theory*, as it is false in *Fact*, to suppose, that *wrong Apprehensions* of *God* and his *Attributes*, with but a *faint* and doubtful *Expectation* of a *future State* of Rewards and Punishments, shou'd operate as powerfully and *universally* on the minds of Men, as *Just* Notions of the *Deity*, together with a *full Assurance* of *another Life*. Now, If this reasoning be just, Human Nature must have been, in some degree, *mended*, by the coming in of the *Gospel*. And whoever is *well vers'd* in *Church History* (contrary to our Author's Assertion) will see this *Truth* illustrated by *Fact* in the *Exemplary Lives* of the *First Christians* in general. Nor were the good Effects of the *Gospel* confin'd to the *early Ages* of the *Church*. Wherever it has been since propagated, it has carry'd its influence along with it, tho' perhaps not in so eminent a degree: in proof of which we need only compare those Countries, where the *Christian Religion* at present flourishes, with those still under the *darkness* of *Pagan Error*, and *Superstition*; and, if
it

it appears, that the *Sentiments* and *Manners* of men are infinitely more *rational* in the former, than in the latter, we shall have a *demonstration* against our *Author*, and a full proof, that the *Christian Religion*, tho' perhaps its *success* may not have born a just porportion to its *excellence*, is yet far from being wholly *Ineffectual*, and has actually had a considerable influence towards reforming mankind.

These are the most *material* Objections, which this *Author* has *occasionally* urg'd against the *credit* and *Authority* of the *Christian Revelation* — Its *Partiality*, and want of *Effect* — I go on, in the last place, to consider his *Treatment* of the *Scripture*, those *Sacred Writings*, in which this *Revelation* is contain'd — And here, as it is not my design to enter upon a *complete Vindication* of *Scripture* from the many and groundless *Cavils* of this *Author*, I shall select but a *Few* of the more remarkable *Instances* of this kind, and leave the *Reader* to judge of the rest from this *Specimen*.

Among the numerous *Objections* of this *Author* to the *History* of the *Old Testament*, That, which gives him most offence, is The Account of the *Jews ex-*
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tirpating the Canaanites. "This story
 " (he says) has given great advantage to
 " the Enemies of our Religion, who re-
 " present the whole as an unparallel'd
 " piece of Injustice and Cruelty." — And
 the Injustice and Cruelty of it (it seems)
 consists in the *Israelites* "invading, and
 " that too without any declaration of
 " War, the *Canaanites*, a free and in-
 " dependent Nation, and against whom
 " They had not the least cause of com-
 " plaint, and, on pretence of their be-
 " ing Idolaters, destroying not only the
 " Men and the Women, but Infants in-
 " capable of Idolatry, or any other
 " crime." (*vid. p. 271, 272, &c.*)

It will be in vain to plead, that the
Jews, in this whole transaction, acted
 by the express *command* of God. Our
 Author has enter'd his *Caveat* against
 this *Plea*, by assuring us, that "Such a
 " command is pleaded in vain, unless
 " it can be shewn, that the Thing com-
 " manded is not inconsistent with the
 " Law of Nature; which if God can
 " dispense with in one case, he may in
 " all; nor cou'd his wisdom, then, pre-
 " scribe any certain Rule of Conduct
 " either for himself or his Creatures;
 " but all wou'd depend on an un-
 " certain, arbitrary, fluctuating, Will."

Nay

Nay he asserts, that "No man can be
 "as certain he had any such Positive
 "Command from God, as he must be
 "that God had forbid it him by the
 "Light of Nature."

This is, indeed, a heavy charge
 against the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testa-*
ment, as it accuses them of *counterfeit-*
ing the *seal* of *Heaven*, and Stamping
 the *Authority* of *God* himself upon the
vilest Action any People cou'd be guilty
 of. — Let us try, then, if we cannot
 clear the *story*, now before us, from this
 Imputation of a *Religious Forgery*; by
 shewing, that it is very consistent to
 suppose *God* might issue out such a
command, and consequently highly pro-
 per the *Jews* shou'd obey it. And

In order to shew this, I observe, that
 the *Nature* of All *Actions* whatever is
 absolutely determin'd by their *Tendency*;
 and that they are *really Good* or *Bad*,
 as the *Consequences*, which *do*, or *may*,
 flow from them, are of one or 'tother
 kind. For what is it, that constitutes
 the nature of *Right* and *Wrong*, with
 regard to *Human Actions*, but their *Pro-*
priety or *Impropriety* to produce the *Ge-*
neral Happiness of *Mankind*? — In the
 next place, do not *Circumstances* great-
 ly vary the nature of *Actions*, and ren-
 der

der *That*, at *one time*, *fit* and *proper* to be done, which, at *another time*, and under *other circumstances*, wou'd be the *contrary*? — Let me, therefore, ask this Author, whether an *Action*, which, to the *short-sighted* view of *Human Understanding*, which is incapable of discovering its *Whole Tendency*, Shall appear *improper* to be done, may not to the *supream Creator* of all things, who sees its *remotest consequences*, appear, *upon the whole*, highly *proper* to be done; and *vice versâ*: whence it will evidently follow, (as much a *Paradox* as it may seem to this Author) that *God* may, consistently with the nature of *Right* and *Wrong*, command the performance of an *Action*, which, to *Human Prudence*, exclusive of the *divine command*, cou'd not but have appear'd to be A *Wrong Action*.

To apply this to the present case, The *dispossessing* of the *Canaanites*, and settling the *Jews* in their country, must, setting aside *Revelation*, have appear'd to *Human Prudence* an *unjust Procedure*; and for this reason, because it was depriving the former of their undoubted *Property*, and bestowing it on the latter, who cou'd have no *Natural Right* and *Title* to what the *Canaanites*

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were

were actually in possession of. But might not this *Action* appear to the *Supream Being*, in a very *different Light*? — Suppose the *Canaanites* to have been a very *wicked* and *Idolatrous* People: the *Loss* of their *Lives*, and the *Extirpation* of their *whole Race*, might be a *proper Punishment* on them for their *Wickedness*, and *Idolatry*. — Here then will be *One good Reason*, why this *Nation* might justly be treated in this seemingly barbarous and inhuman *Manner*. — Suppose farther, that the *OEconomy* of *Providence*, in preparing the world for the future reception of the *Gospel*, might require, that the *Jews*, whom he had selected from the rest of mankind to preserve the *true worship* of *Himself*, shou'd be situated in the *Land of Canaan*; Here will be *another Reason* for dispossessing the *Canaanites*, whose *private Good* cou'd not, consistently with the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God, be prefer'd to the *General Good* of *Mankind*. The *First* of these *Reasons* is expressly *re-veal'd* in *Scripture*; and the *Jews* are repeatedly assur'd, that it was not any *Merit* of their own, but the *Iniquities* of the *Canaanites*, that were the cause of their *Expulsion*. The latter may be
strongly

strongly infer'd from the whole Series of the *Jewish History*.

Thus far, then, I think we are clear, as to the *Propriety* of the *meer Action* (the *Dipossessing* of the *Canaanites*) Stript of all its *circumstances*, and *manner* of being perform'd. — The only remaining Difficulty is concerning The *Method*, in which this Event was brought about, and the *Actors* concern'd in it. To these our Author can by no means be reconcil'd. The *Extirpation* of a *Whole People*, even *Those*, who cou'd not *deserve* it, and that too by the Hands of *another People*, whom they had never *injur'd*, seems to Him so shocking a procedure, that He cannot help joining with the *Enemies of our Religion* in representing the whole Transaction as an *unparallel'd piece of Cruelty and Injustice*.

There are *Two Things* in the *History* of this *Event*, which give him most offence; The *Extirpation* of the *Whole People*, even *Infants*, who cou'd not partake in the *Guilt* of their *Parents*; And The Effecting this by the Hands of the *Jews*, without *Provocation*, or *Injury* receiv'd on their part.

As to the First, I observe, that In *National Calamities* it is unreason-

able to expect, that God shou'd *miraculously* interpose in directing it to fall only on the *Guilty* Head. Where *Plague* or *Famine* afflict a People, The *Good* and the *Bad* are alike involv'd in the *general Calamity*; and I believe no reasonable Man ever objected to Providence on that account — But, farther, it ought to be consider'd, that what was a *Punishment* to the *Idolatrous Parent*, was, in reality, a *Blessing* to the yet *Innocent Child*, in preventing, by death, that *state of Impiety*, into which the Prejudice of *Education*, and a *vicious Example*, might otherwise have plung'd it. — But a *Future State* sets this matter quite clear; since it can be no *Injury* to a Creature, to be depriv'd of a *Short*, and perhaps a *miserable*, Life, and be recompenc'd for the Loss with an infinitely *Happy*, and *Immortal* Existence.

But why must the *Jews* be the *Actors* in this *Tragedy*; a People whom the *Canaanites* had never injur'd? — “God
 “has a thousand ways — of punish-
 “ing wicked Nations — without com-
 “manding Men to do any thing con-
 “trary to the *Laws of Nature*.” —
Plague, or *Famine*, wou'd have executed the *divine vengeance* as effectually, and
 fav'd

fav'd the *Jews* the Guilt of so *unlawful* an *Invasion*.

I reply, that the *Jews* were nothing more than *Instruments* in the Hands of Providence in this whole Transaction. God had determin'd to punish this People by an Utter Extirpation; and surely He was at Liberty to make use of what *Means* he thought *fit*. No! you will say — not such *means* as break in upon the *Laws* of *Nature*. But let me ask you, Why is it *unlawful* for one Nation to *invade* another, without *Provocation*, or *Injury* receiv'd? You must answer, Because the *People invaded* will thereby *suffer* in their *Lives* and *Properties*, to which they have as good a natural *Right*, as the *Invaders* themselves have to their own *Lives* and *Properties*. But this is not the Case at present. The *Canaanites*, before the *Jewish Invasion*, had *forfeited*, by *Guilt*, their *Lives* and *Properties* to *God*, and the *Jews* were only *Instrumental* in inflicting that *Punishment* upon them, which *God* had *before* determin'd they shou'd undergo. The *Equity* of this Procedure may be illustrated by a familiar Case. It is in general contrary to the *Law* of *Nature*, that One Man shou'd take away the *Life* of another:
yet,

yet, if I *forfeit* my Life to the *Society*, The *Executioner*, who takes it, does not offend against the Law of Nature. — The *Jews* were but *Executioners* of the *divine Vengeance* on a *Wicked* and *Idolatrous* Generation.

But there is another Objection against the *Jews* being concern'd in this transaction. They were “the most improper people to convince the world, that they did not act out of a private Interest, but purely to execute God’s Vengeance on an Idolatrous Nation.” — For, “Wou’d God, in such a case, choose a people as prone to Idolatry, as the *Canaanites* themselves?” — I answer, They were, Upon that very account, the more *fit* to be employ’d in punishing the *Canaanites*; since the sight and remembrance of such a *signal* Act of *divine vengeance* on an *Idolatrous* Nation, was a proper *preservative* to *themselves* against relapsing into the *same Crime*.

But we are not to come off so easily: There is still a notable Argument behind, to prove that the *Israelites* had no *right* to invade the *Canaanites*; and that is, “because the *Canaanites* had a *right* to *defend* themselves;” which, according to our Author, is “supposing
“two

“ two opposite rights at the same time,
 “ a right in the *Jews*, by *Revelation*,
 “ to take away the Lives of the *Cana-*
 “ *anites*, and a right in the *Canaanites*,
 “ by the *Law of Nature*, to defend
 “ their Lives.” — To which I answer,
 that the *Jews* had just *such a right* to
 take away the Lives of the *Canaanites*,
 as an *Executioner*, authoriz’d by any
 Government, has to take away the
 Life of a *Malefactor*, who has *forfeited*
 it by *sentence* of the *Law*; And the
Canaanites had just *such a right* of *de-*
fending their Lives, as a *condemn’d Cri-*
minal has to escape, if he can, from
 the Hand of Justice.

What has been advanc’d is, I hope,
 sufficient to vindicate the Conduct of
 the *Jews* in driving out the *Canaanites*,
 and to shew, that they did nothing, in
 this whole transaction, *inconsistent with*
the Law of Nature. Nor will it *avail*
 our Author to plead, that “ No Man
 “ can be as certain he had any such
 “ Positive Command from God, as he
 “ must be that God had forbid it him
 “ by the Light of Nature.” — For by
 What authority will you assert, that
 God cannot afford men *equal degrees of*
Evidence, in whatever manner he thinks
 proper to *reveal his will*, whether by
 the

the Light of Nature, or immediate *Revelation*?

This Objection, you see, lies against the *Credit* of the *Sacred story* of the *Old Testament*. Let us go on to examine whether the *Scriptures* of the *New* have met with a more favourable reception at this Gentleman's Hands. And here I shall select the *Two* following *Objections*.

The First lies against the *Parabolical style* of the *Gospel*, and the *seeming Reason* assign'd for it by our *Saviour* himself. "Is not (says this Author) "the New Testament full of Parables; "nay is it not said, that *without a Parable Jesus spake not to the multitude*; "and for this *remarkable Reason*, that "seeing they might see and not perceive, "and hearing they might hear and not "understand; lest at any time they shou'd "be converted, and their sins shou'd be "forgiven them —?" (p. 332.) Where He wou'd persuade us, that the true reason why *Jesus* made use of Parables, was, by his own confession, that his *Doctrine* might not be understood.

If this Gentleman had carefully consider'd the Passage of *Scripture*, upon which he founds this Objection, he must have seen his mistake. We read
(*Mark*

(Mark. 4. 11, 12.) *And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables; That seeing they may see and not perceive, &c. — And, at the 34th verse, — without a parable spake he not unto them: and, when they were alone, he expounded all things to his Disciples. —* Here are evidently two sorts of persons, to whom our Saviour's Doctrine was deliver'd, *Them, that were without*, and his *Disciples*. To the former he address'd himself in *parables*, but *expounded all things* to the latter. By the description *Them that are without*, Our Lord undoubtedly meant the *Generality of his Auditors*, who were greatly prejudic'd against his doctrine, and these, he cou'd not but foreknow, wou'd have reject'd it, tho' ever so plainly and intelligibly deliver'd. — *Grotius*, accordingly, upon the place interprets τῶν ἐξῶ (*them that are without*) *Illis, qui audiebant quidem Christum, sed not discendæ pietatis animo* — It was therefore equal to such people, whether our Saviour's Doctrines were deliver'd in *parables*, or not. They had no right to a full *Instruction in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God*, as not

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being

being dispos'd to receive and embrace them. And therefore the Expression immediately following, *ἵνας βλέποντες*, &c. *that seeing they may see, and not perceive*, &c. carries indeed the reason of our Saviour's conduct towards them, but a reason founded in themselves, in their own *obstinate* disposition and *hardness of Heart*. Nor is this construction unusual with the Penmen of the New Testament, as may be shewn from many parallel expressions, particularly *Mat. 23. 34, 35. Wherefore behold I send unto you Prophets and Wise Men, and some of them ye shall kill, and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city;—That upon you may come (ὅπως ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἔλθῃ) all the righteous Blood spilt upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.* Where it cannot be meant, that our Saviour wou'd send *Prophets* and *wise Men* to them only with a view of drawing down the divine vengeance upon them. No! It only declares the *Event* or *Consequence* of their treating them in the manner describ'd.

The

The other Objection is, that *the Scriptural and Philosophical Account of Natural Things* seldom agrees; as an Instance of which he tells us, (*p.* 209.) "There is scarce a Country-Man so ignorant, as not to know, that, if the Seed, thrown into the Earth, is kill'd by drought, or dies by any other Accident, it never rises; but St. Paul says *Thou Fool, that which thou sowest is not quicken'd, except it die.* (1 Cor. 15. 36.) — And our Saviour himself says, *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*" (Joh. 12, 24.) — Hast thou appeal'd unto the Country-man, Sir —? Unto the Country-man Thou shalt go. He will tell you, that the *External Part*, or *Outward Coat*, of the *Seed* must *rot*, before the *seed* can spring up, and bring forth *fruit*. This was always so well known a piece of *Natural Philosophy*, that St. Paul might very well express the *Whole* for the *Part*, without any danger of being misunderstood. — When A Friend or Neighbour is buried, Do we not say, *The Man is dead*, tho' but a *Part* of the *Human Composition* rots in the *Grave*. And this suggests to us the propriety

and *elegance* of the *similitude*. For as the *Shell* or *Coat* of the *Seed* dies before it is *quicken'd*, so the *Body* must suffer *death*, before the *Whole Man* rises to *Immortal Life*.

To these Objections I shall only add this Author's *Novel Hypothesis* concerning the Extent of *Christ's commission*, which he has thought fit to limit, and confine to but a *Part* of *Mankind*. His Proof of it is admirable. "*Jesus* (he tells us) does not say, he was sent to *all Israel*, but to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. And his Parable about the *lost Sheep* plainly suppos'd *All* were not lost. And when it was objected to him, that he kept company with *sinners*, he owns the Charge, and says, *The whole need not a Physician but They that are Sick*; which wou'd have been an improper answer, if he thought that all stood in need of *him and his Spiritual Physick*. And, to confirm this he adds, *I am not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to repentance*. Which is dividing mankind into two parts, The *Whole* or *Righteous*, and The *Sick* or *Sinners*; and that his business was wholly with the latter." — And he adds, "The not observing this distinction has
" been

“been the cause of many gross and
 “uncharitable mistakes; and 'tis some-
 “what strange, that *Jesus*, who best
 “knew how far his commission extend-
 “ed, shou'd not be credited in this
 “matter.” (p. 48.)

I confess my self wholly unacquaint-
 ed with this Gentleman's private Cha-
 racter, but think he can have no rea-
 son to be angry, if I take it for grant-
 ed, that an Author, who has such high
 notions of *Morality*, is himself a Good
Moral Man. If so, does it not follow
 from his own *Hypothesis*, that *Christ's*
Commission extends not to *Him*. His
Moral Qualifications, to be sure, rank
 him in the *first Class* or Division of
 Mankind, The *Whole* or *Righteous*—
 one of the *Happy Few*, the *virtuous*
Minority, who enjoy so perfect a *Health*
 of *Innocence* and *Goodness*, as to stand
 in no need of the *Spiritual Physick* of
 the *Gospel*.—And therefore upon his
 own Principles, he is unavoidably re-
 duc'd to this *dilemma*, either to quit
 the Title of A *Christian*, or That of
 A *Moral Man*.—Which of the Two
 he will chuse, is no difficult matter to
 guess.—Besides, That *sneering, con-*
temptuous, Expression—*Him and his*
Spiritual Physick—is a broad Insinu-
 ation,

ation, that, whatever might be the general *Disease* of Human Nature, the *Remedy*, administred by the *Gospel*, is, in his opinion, at best but a *Quack Medicine*.

It were almost trifling to spend any time in vindicating our *Saviour's* words from the false *Gloss* here put upon them. Every one must see, that *Jesus* intended to declare, that *he came not to call a Righteous, but a Sinful, WORLD to Repentance*; supposing (as St. Paul himself understands the doctrine, *Rom. 5. 12.*) that *All had sinned*. All Mankind, in a greater or less degree, partook of the contagion of sin; and consequently *All* stood in need, more or less, of the *Salutary Influence* of the G O S P E L.

The Reader will observe, that These Objections to the *Gospel Revelation* are chiefly taken from this Author's 14th Chapter, in which he sets himself to confute the late Dr. *Clarke's* excellent *Discourse* of The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation; and to shew from thence, how inconsistent soever with the design of that discourse, that nothing can be a part
of

of Religion, but what is founded on the nature and Reason of Things. (p. 353)

In order to which he charges the *Doctor* with *Inconsistency*, in first describing the *Religion of Nature* as absolutely perfect, and its Precepts *Plain* and *intelligible* to *all Men*, and afterwards giving up this *Hypothesis*, and representing it as *obscure*, and *defective*. — The Charge runs thus. “Who cou’d expect, after
 “we had been told, that, as God governs all his own actions by the Eternal Rule of Reason, so all his rational Creatures are oblig’d to govern themselves in all theirs by the same Eternal Rule: A Rule too, own’d to be so plain, that *the Reason of all men naturally and necessarily assent to it*: Who, I say, after these, and a number of other such Expressions, cou’d imagine that all this shou’d be unsaid, and the utmost Art employ’d to shew the Imperfection, Insufficiency, Obscurity, and Uncertainty, of the Light of Nature; and that, by reason of its many defects, all mankind were in an unavoidable State of corruption?” (p. 419.)

It must be own’d these *two* Accounts of *Natural Religion* are very *inconsistent* with each other; but then the
Incon-

Inconsistency lies, not in the *Doctor's* Scheme, but in this Gentleman's Representation of it. — *Dr. Clarke*, after having, with great clearness, and Strength of Reason, demonstrated, that From the *Eternal* and *necessary* differences of *Things* there naturally and necessarily arise certain *moral Obligations*, which are of *themselves* incumbent on all *rational Creatures* — that the same *Eternal Obligations* are moreover the express *Will*, and *Command*, of *God* — and that *these things* are so notoriously plain and self-evident, that nothing but the extreme-*st* stupidity of mind, corruption of manners, or perverseness of Spirit can possibly make any man entertain the least doubt of them.* — goes on to shew, that Though the *Necessity* and *Indispensableness* of all the great and moral obligations of *Natural Religion*, and also the certainty of a future state of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, be in general, deducible, even demonstrably, by a chain of clear and undeniable reasoning; yet (in the present state of the world, by what means soever it came originally to be so corrupted —) such is the *Carelessness*, *Inconsiderateness*, and want of *Attention*, of the greater part of mankind; so many the *Prejudices*, and

* *Evid.* p. 177.

false Notions *taken up by* evil Education; *so strong and violent the unreasonable* Lufts, Appetites, and Desires of Sense; *and so great the Blindness, introduc'd by* superstitious opinions, vicious customs, *and debauched practices, thro' the world; that very few are able in reality and effect to discover these things clearly for themselves; but men have great need of particular Teaching and much Instruction, to convince them of the Truth, and Certainty, and Importance of these things; to give them a due Sense and clear and just Apprehensions concerning them, and to bring them effectually to the Practice of the plainest and most necessary Duties.**

Now Can any Thing be plainer than that this Excellent Writer's charge of *Imperfection, and Uncertainty*, does not lie against the *Light of Nature*, but the *Powers of Human Reason* in its corrupt, *degenerate*, State? — Does not Dr. Clarke suppose, that *the moral Obligations of Natural Religion are deducible, even demonstrably, by a Chain of clear and undeniable Reasoning?* — Does he not charge Mankind with *Careless-*

* Prop. v. where the Reader may see these Particulars deduc'd at large.

ness, Inconsiderateness, and want of Attention; with Prejudices, and false Opinions, taken up by Evil Education? — And does he not assign this very Degeneracy as a reason, why Few are able in reality and effect to discover these things clearly for themselves? — And will you still say This is charging the Light of Nature with being Defective? — If our Author does not, or will not, see the consistency of all this, I cannot help it. However, to assist his Apprehension a little, let us consider a Parallel case. Suppose a Race of People, whose Faculty of Sight, thro' some general cause, has been impair'd, and render'd very defective. Wou'd you say, that to charge this people with blindness, and with stumbling even at Noon-day, was to call in question the Light of the Sun? — What the Sun's Light wou'd be to these people, That The Light of Nature is to Mankind in its degenerate condition. And the Doctor's supposing Human Reason in this case not to be a Sufficient Guide, is no more an objection to the Evidence and Perspicuity of Natural Religion, than the supposing this People's Sight Defective, and Insufficient, wou'd be an Argument that

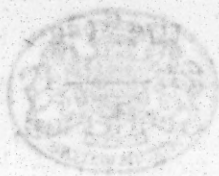
that the *Sun* did not *Shine* upon them at *Noon-day*.

Thus much I thought proper to alledge in vindication of the late Dr. *Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Reveal'd Religion* against this Gentleman's Charge of *Inconsistency** — He owns the *Doct̃or* got immortal Honour by that *Discourse*: (p. 353.) but, if His censure of it be just, this will pass for no great compliment to the understanding, and judgment, of the Generality of the *Doct̃or's Readers*. — And here I take leave of this Gentleman, and his elaborate Work, not in the least surpriz'd, that an *Author*, who endeavours to overthrow the *Credit* and *Authority* of the *Christian Revelation itself*, shou'd take some pains to decry one of the most *judicious*, and most *rational*, *Defences* of It, that has perhaps ever appear'd. But

————— *omnis*
Effusus labor.

* If the Reader wou'd see a full and compleat vindication of the *Doct̃or*, let him consult a very *Able Writer's* late *Defence* of Dr. *Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Reveal'd Religion*.

This Writer's Attempt is Vain. For, Whilst the *Christian Religion* holds its Esteem in the *Sentiments* and *practice* of the *wisest*, the most *Learned*, and most *Moral*, Men, so long will Dr. *Clarke's Book* be read with the utmost *pleasure*, as well as *profit*, and the highest *Reverence* be paid by all *true Professors* of *Christianity* to the memory of Its *Learned* and *Ingenious Apologist*.



F I N I S.



